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AN ACT IN ADDITION TO THE ACT, ENTITLED, “ AN ACT TO PROHIBIT
THE CARRYING ON THE SLAVE-TRADE FROM THE UNITED
STATES TO ANY FOREIGN PLACE OR COUNTRY.”

Section I. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled,* That it shall be unlawful for any citizen of the United States, or other person residing within the United States, directly or indirectly to hold or have any right or property in any vessel employed or made use of in the transportation or carrying of slaves from one foreign country or place to another, and any right or property belonging as aforesaid, shall be forfeited, and may be libelled and condemned for the use of the person who shall sue for the same—and such person transgressing the prohibition aforesaid, shall also forfeit and pay a sum of money equal to double the value of the right or property in such vessel which he held as aforesaid, and shall also forfeit a sum of money equal to double the value of the interest which he may have had in the slaves which at any time may have been transported or carried in such vessel after the passing of this act, and against the form thereof.

Section II. *And be it further enacted,* That it shall be unlawful for any citizen of the United States or other person residing therein, to serve on board any vessel of the United States employed or made use of in the transportation or carrying the slaves from one foreign country or place to another, and any such citizens or other person voluntarily serving as aforesaid shall be liable to be indicted therefor, and on conviction thereof, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars, and be imprisoned not exceeding two years.

Section III. *And be it further enacted,* That if any citizen of the United States shall voluntarily serve on board of any foreign ship or vessel which shall hereafter be employed in the Slave-trade, he shall on conviction thereof, be liable to, and suffer the like forfeitures, pains, disabilities and penalties as he would have incurred had such ship or vessel been owned or employed in whole or in part by any person residing within the United States.

Section IV. *And be it further enacted,* That it shall be lawful for any of the commissioned vessels of the United States, to seize and take any vessel employed in carrying on the trade, business or traffic contrary to the true intent and meaning of this or the said act to which this is in addition, and such vessel, together with

her tackle, apparel and guns, and the goods or effects other than slaves which shall be found on board, shall be forfeited and may be proceeded against in any of the District or Circuit Courts, and shall be condemned for the use of the officers and crew of the vessel making the seizure, and be divided in the proportion directed in the case of prize; and all persons interested in such vessel, or in the enterprise or voyage in which such vessel shall be employed at the time of such capture, shall be precluded from all right or claim to the slaves found on board such vessels as afore said, and from all damages or retribution on account thereof, and it shall moreover be the duty of the commanders of such commissioned vessels to apprehend and take into custody every person found on board of such vessel so seized and taken, being of the officers or crew thereof, and him or them convey as soon as conveniently may be, to the civil, authority of the United States in some one of the Districts thereof, to be proceeded against in due course of law.

Section V. *And be it further enacted*, That the District and Circuit Courts of the United States shall have cognizance of all acts and offences against the prohibitions herein contained.

Section VI. *Provided nevertheless, and be it further enacted*, That nothing in this act contained, shall be construed to authorize the bringing into either of the United States any person or persons, the importation of whom is by the existing laws of such state prohibited.

Section VII. *And be it further enacted*, That the forfeitures which shall hereafter be incurred under this or the said act to which this is in addition not otherwise disposed of, shall accrue and be one moiety thereof to the use of the informer, and the other moiety to the use of the United States, except where the prosecution shall be first instituted on behalf of the United States, in which case, the whole shall be to their use.

THEODORE SEDGWICK, *Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

THOMAS JEFFERSON, *Vice President of the United States, and President of the Senate.*

Approved—May 10th A. D. 1800,

John Adams, *President of the United States.*⁷

⁷ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1795-1804, pp. 24-29

AN ACT TO PROHIBIT THE CARRYING ON THE SLAVE TRADE, FROM
THE UNITED STATES TO ANY FOREIGN PLACE OR COUNTRY.

Section I. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled,* That no citizen or citizens of the United States, or foreigner, or any other person coming into, or residing within the same, shall, for himself, or any other person whatsoever, either as master, factor or owner, build, fit, equip, load or otherwise prepare any ship or vessel, within any port or place of the said United States, nor shall cause any ship or vessel to sail from any port or place within the same, for the purpose of carrying on any trade or traffic in slaves to any foreign country; or for the purpose of procuring, from any foreign kingdom, place or country, the inhabitants of such kingdom, place or country, to be transported to any foreign country, port or place whatever, to be sold or disposed of, as slaves; And if any ship or vessel shall be so fitted out, as aforesaid, for the said purposes, or shall be caused to sail, so as aforesaid, every such ship or vessel, her tackle, furniture, apparel and other appurtenances, shall be forfeited to the United States; and shall be liable to be seized, prosecuted and condemned, in any of the circuit courts or district court for the district, where the said ship or vessel may be found and seized.

Section II. *And be it further enacted,* That all and every person, so building, fitting out, equipping, loading, or otherwise preparing, or sending away, any ship or vessel, knowing, or intending that the same shall be employed in such trade or business, contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, or any ways aiding or abetting therein, shall severally forfeit and pay the sum of two thousand dollars, one moiety thereof, to the use of the United States, and the other moiety thereof, to the use of him or her, who shall sue for and prosecute the same.

Section III. *And be it further enacted,* That the owner, master or factor of each and every foreign ship or vessel, clearing out for any of the coasts or kingdoms of Africa, or suspected to be intended for the Slave-trade, and the suspicion being declared to the officer of the customs, by any citizen, on oath or affirmation, and such information being to the satisfaction of the said officer, shall first give bond with sufficient sureties, to the Treasurer of the United States, that none of the natives of Africa, or any other foreign country or place, shall be taken on board the said ship or vessel,

to be transported, or sold as slaves, in any other foreign port or place whatever, within nine months thereafter.

Section IV. *And be it further enacted*, That if any citizen or citizens of the United States shall, contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, take on board, receive or transport any such persons, as above described in this act, for the purpose of selling them as slaves, as afore said, he or they shall forfeit and pay, for each and every person, so received on board, transported, or sold as afore said, the sum of two hundred dollars, to be recovered in any court of the United States, proper to try the same, the one moiety thereof, to the use of the United States, and the other moiety to the use of such person or persons, who shall sue for and prosecute the same.

FREDERICK AUGUSTUS MUHLENBERG,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

JOHN ADAMS,
*Vice President of the United States,
and President of the Senate.*

Approved—March the twenty second, 1794,

GO. WASHINGTON,
President of the United States.

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.⁸

The memorial and petition of the Delegates from the several Societies, formed in different parts of the United States, for promoting the abolition of slavery, in Convention assembled at Philadelphia, on the first day of January, 1794.

Respectfully shew,

THAT your memorialists, having been appointed, by various Societies, in different parts of the Union, for the benevolent purpose of endeavouring to alleviate or suppress some of the miseries of their fellow-creatures, deem it their duty to approach the Congress of the United States with a respectful representation of certain evils,—the unauthorised acts of a few, but injurious to the interest and reputation of all.

America, dignified by being the first in modern times, to assert and defend the equal rights of man, suffers her fame to be tarnished

⁸ Minutes of Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates, from the Abolition Societies, 1794, pp. 26-27.

and her example to be weakened, by a cruel commerce, carried on from some of her ports, for the supply of foreign nations with African slaves.

To enumerate the horrors incident to this inhuman traffic, of which all the worst passions of mankind form the principal materials, would be unnecessary, when we offer to prove its existence.

Nor is it requisite to consume much of your valuable time in the endeavour to prove it a national injury.

While it exposes the lives and the morals of our seamen to peculiar danger, it renders all complaints of retaliation unjust; for those who deprive others of their liberty, for the benefit of foreign countries, cannot reasonably murmur, if, by other foreign nations, they are deprived of their own.

True it is, that the captivity at Algiers is not without a hope, and that the slavery of the West-Indies terminates only with existence; but, in proportion as that to which we are accessory is more severe, the duty of desisting from it becomes more urgent.

Your memorialists observe, and mention with pleasure, that this venal cruelty is at present confined to a few ports, and a few persons. Hence it becomes more easy to destroy a degrading exception from the general dignity of our commerce, and to restore our citizens to their former fame, of preferring the spirit of freedom to the delusions of interest.

An additional reason for the legislative interference, now requested, arises from the natural consequence of the facts already suggested.

Foreigners, seduced by the example, and believing that they may commit without reproach, what American citizens commit with impunity, avail themselves of our ports to fit out their vessels for the same traffic. Thus we become the accomplices of their offences, and partake of the guilt without the miserable consolation of sharing its profits.

Your memorialists, therefore, trusting that a compliance with their request, will not exceed the constitutional powers of Congress, nor injure the interests or disturb the tranquility of any part of the Union, respectfully pray, that a law may be passed prohibiting the traffic carried on by citizens of the United States for the supply of slaves to foreign nations, and preventing foreigners from fitting out vessels for the slave-trade in the ports of the United States.

MEMORIAL

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED,

The Memorial of the American Convention for promoting the
Abolition of Slavery, and improving the condition of the African
Race,

Respectfully sheweth,

That, in the pursuit of the object of their association, your memorialists feel it their duty, to call your attention to the territory over which Congress holds exclusive legislation. The patriot, the philosopher, and the statesman, look to this spot, where the legislative authority of the Republic has an uncontrolled operation, for that perfect system of laws, which shall at once develope the wisdom of the government, and display the justice and benevolence of its policy.

Is it not an incongruous exhibition to ourselves, as well as to foreigners who may visit the seat of the government of the nation, whose distinguishing characteristic is its devotion to freedom, whose constitution proclaims that all men are born free, to behold, on the one hand, the representatives of the people, asserting, with impassioned eloquence, the unalienable rights of man; and, on the other, to see our fellow men, children of the same Almighty Father, heirs like ourselves of immortality, doomed, for a difference of complexion, themselves and their posterity, to hopeless bondage?

Deeply impressed with this sentiment, your memorialists do earnestly, but respectfully, request your honourable body, to take into your serious consideration, the situation of Slavery in the District of Columbia; to devise a plan for its gradual, but certain abolition, within the limits of your exclusive legislation; and to provide that all children born of slaves, after a determinate period, shall be free.

*Signed on behalf and by order of the American Convention, assembled at New-York, November 28th, 1821.*⁹

The report of the committee was accepted: and the Memorial proposed,

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED,

The American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and improving the condition of the African race, being deeply

⁹ Minutes of Proceedings, Convention of Abolition Societies, Philadelphia, 1821, pp. 41-42.

impressed with the magnitude of the evil of involuntary servitude, beg leave to call the attention of Congress, to the devising of such means as may be practicable for preventing its extension.

When we reflect on the praiseworthy regard shown to the rights of man by the Republics of South America, in their public acts respecting Slavery, we cherish a hope that the United States will emulate their example, so far as the constitution will allow; and thus assist in hastening the period, when our country will no longer afford the advocates of despotism arguments in its defence, drawn from the inconsistency of Republicans;—when it will no longer furnish an exemplification of the truth, that those who are most zealous in asserting political and religious liberty for themselves, are too prone to trample on the claims of others to those blessings.

The evils of slavery, and its injustice, abstractedly considered, are so generally admitted by the citizens of all the states, that we deem it unnecessary to adduce arguments for their proof. A favourable occasion for circumscribing these evils, and discountenancing this injustice, is, we conceive, now offered to Congress, in the power and opportunity of legislating for the newly acquired territory of the Floridas.

The first Congress after the adoption of the American Constitution, composed partly of the framers of that instrument, having, with great unanimity, forbidden the introduction of slaves into the territory northwest of the Ohio; and more than three-fourths of the last Congress, having, after a full discussion of the constitutionality of the act, voted in favour of restricting the migration of slaves to another territory of the United States; the right of imposing such a restriction with regard to the Floridas, appears sufficiently established. Such being the case, we beseech you, by your duty to that Almighty Being who controls the destinies of nations, to strive to mitigate and limit an evil, so universally acknowledged and deplored. And may you, from so doing, reap a satisfaction, beyond any to be derived from possessing the fruits of the industry of thousands—the satisfaction of having been governed, in your conduct, by the principles of reason, humanity, and religion!

Though the motives already urged, appear sufficient to induce a prohibition of the further introduction of slaves into the Floridas, yet we will briefly mention some additional ones, supposed to possess considerable force.

The vacant lands within the new states and territories, have been

looked upon as a field of promise,—a common patrimony for all the sons of the Republic who may choose to partake of it. The introduction of many slaves into a territory, will totally prevent the settlement of free labourers within it. As the states, adapted to the cultivation of the valuable staples, cotton, sugar, and tobacco, having been hitherto open to the migration of slaves, it appears but equitable, now to reserve a district, for the free labourer to occupy in the culture of these articles. It is but just, that the citizens of those states where slavery is interdicted, should be enabled, without a sacrifice of their principles, to obtain a portion of the profits arising from the settlement of those new lands, which are suitable for rearing such products as are most in demand, and are, consequently, the most lucrative.

Signed on behalf, and by order of the American Convention, held at New York, the 28th of November, 1821.¹⁰

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

The Memorial of the American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and improving the condition of the African race, respectfully sheweth :

That your memorialists, acting in accordance with the designs of their Association, and prompted by their love of country and the paramount obligations of Christianity, earnestly solicit your attention to the condition of the population of the territory over which your honourable body holds exclusive jurisdiction. More than half a century has elapsed since the representatives of the American States, in Congress assembled, declared to the world, as “self-evident truths: that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” But that Congress, one of the greatest and most dignified bodies the world ever beheld having but limited jurisdiction, were unable to do more than to proclaim these truths, as the basis of the government they were about to establish. The Constitution since framed, has delegated no authority to the General Government to enforce their views in relation to slavery, existing in any of the States; but that instrument, so far as it respects the District of Columbia, has invested Congress with an unrestrained privilege.

¹⁰ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1821, pp. 46–48.

To this spot the eyes of the friends of equal rights are directed : to this spot the patriot, the philosopher, and the statesman, look for that perfect system of laws which at once develope the wisdom of the Government, display the justice and benevolence of its policy, and exhibit a practical illustration of the principles proclaimed in our declaration of independence.

Within this District, however, slavery yet exists ; many of the African race, purchased for a distant market, are concentrated here, where the sounds of the clanking fetters mingle with the voice of American statesmen, legislating for a free people !

We, therefore, most respectfully, but most earnestly, entreat your attention to the subject of slavery in the District of Columbia ; and especially we solicit that your honorable body may designate a period by law, after which no child, born within the District, shall be held a slave. We respectfully submit that the honor of our common country, a decent respect for the opinions of mankind, and the strong injunctions of Christianity, alike call for your interference upon this momentous subject.

WM. RAWLE, *President*.¹¹

Edwin P. Atlee, *Secretary*,
Philadelphia, Oct. 1827.

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED :

The American Convention for promoting the abolition of slavery and improving the condition of African race, most respectfully represent :

That an opportunity is now offered, in which, without violating any supposed private rights, or encroaching upon any state sovereignty, the exalted principles of liberty, on which our constitution was founded, may be fully displayed and enforced by your honourable body.

The eminent rank, which these United States have so rapidly attained among nations, is mainly attributable to the high dignity and undeviating rectitude of their public proceedings—to the equal rights and universal freedom of their citizens. Our enemies can cast on us but one reproach, but, of that reproach they are not sparing. Why, they ask, if all men are born free and equal, is the slavery of so large a portion of your inhabitants still continued

¹¹ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1827, pp. 29–30.

among you? To this enquiry no better answer can be given than, that at the period of our political emancipation, the situation of the Southern States was supposed to render the measure of domestic emancipation dangerous, if not impracticable. Yet those who had the misfortune to be subjected to this evil, would willingly have commuted a species of precarious and artificial property for any other more substantial in itself, and more consonant with their own moral feelings. It has since been the frequent effort of Southern legislation to diminish the quantity of the evil, which, it is supposed, could not wholly be removed. Hence their concurrence in the suppression of the slave trade, and hence, in some instances, their refusal to admit other slaves from other States into their own precincts. In all similar efforts, we doubt not that the legislature of the United States would accordingly coöperate, but the defect of power sometimes impedes the wishes of benevolence and the dispensation of justice.

Aware that however consonant the opinions of your honourable body on this subject may be with our own, your constitutional powers as thus limited, we abstain from preferring any request to which you cannot accede; but we respectfully submit that in the late acquisition of an extensive tract, in a great part yet unsettled, the absolute dominion and internal regulation of which belong to Congress alone, the trial might be made, whether a southern latitude necessarily requires the establishment of domestic slavery; or whether in the Territory of Florida, as well as in other places, the cultivation of land, and the general prosperity of the country, would not be eminently promoted by the use of free labor alone. If the few persons who are already settled there, desire to retain their fellow creatures in bondage, let the example of the superior productiveness of free labor be set before their eyes, and let Congress avail itself of the happy opportunity to elevate the Territory itself to a pinnacle of prosperity, while it supports our national character, in the preservation of human rights and consistent justice.

Another consideration may be added to the foregoing. The extensive unsettled coast of this Territory, and its vicinity to the West India Islands, render the evasion of the existing laws against the slave trade easy—whereas, if it were settled by a free yeomanry, it would form an effectual barrier to such illicit trade, and a strong protection to the slave holding states against the invasion of a foreign enemy.

Our most respectful request is, that Congress will be pleased to prohibit, by law, the further introduction of slaves into the Territory of Florida.

WM. RAWLE, *President*.¹²

Edwin P. Atlee, *Secretary*,
Philadelphia, Oct. 1827.

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

The memorial of the American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and improving the condition of the African Race,

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS,

That your memorialists being citizens of this free republic, and feeling in a high degree thankful for the favours and protection of its benign government, are solicitous, in common with all the advocates of true liberty, that its benefits should be extended to the whole human family—that all mankind might be permitted to enjoy peaceably, the full fruition of national rights, and the great blessings of heaven, while here on earth, the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Your memorialists, without presuming to question the dignity, superior wisdom, and qualifications of your honourable body, would ask leave most respectfully to urge, as a sentiment, every day gaining a wider spread, and a deeper root, in the best feelings of freemen, that slavery is alike derogatory to the present enlightened condition of man, and a solecism in the institutions of our country: without, in any degree, wishing to appeal to the prejudices, either sectarian or geographical, of any portion of your honourable body, your memorialists cannot consent to withhold themselves from the influence of the irresistible current, manifest in the march of mind, towards perfection, and are therefore free to acknowledge, that they cannot, as consistent republicans, omit to raise their voices, in a respectful petition to their government on behalf of the sufferings, the privations, and the unmerited degradation of their fellow-men the colored people of America.

That the several states in this confederation, are, to a certain constitutional extent, sovereign and independent, is readily ad-

¹² Minutes of Proceedings, Convention of Abolition Societies, Baltimore, 1827, pp. 30–31.

mitted; but that their independence is qualified by the federal constitution, is equally certain. No state, has a right to injure or destroy the fair fame of the republic: and no state has a right, unnecessarily to jeopardize the peace of prosperity of any other state. And that all the states, and all the people of each and every state in the union, are indissolubly bound to submit to the majority, is a fundamental principle of the union.

With these preliminary remarks, your memorialists will ask your paternal and special attention to the subject of *slavery in the District of Columbia*. This District, the seat of the national councils, and the common property of the whole republic, is by the constitution of the country, under your immediate care, and exclusive government—and to the combined wisdom, patriotism and prudence of your honourable body, is the common mind turned, with intense anxiety, knowing that nothing can exempt any portion of us from the shame and mortification that may attach to the character of its public laws and institutions; while nothing can prevent their participation in the splendour and renown of its wisdom, prosperity, and happiness. The District of Columbia, then, being the common property of the nation, the nation has an indubitable right, and it is consistent with the fitness of things, to have the institutions and the laws of the District, conformably to the aggregate sentiment of the whole people. The clearly expressed public opinion is against the continuance of slavery—and, by every rule of right, slavery should cease, as soon as practicable, within the national domain.

Under a full conviction of the truth of this doctrine, and the justice of their cause, your memorialists ask of your honourable body, the immediate enactment of such laws as will ensure the abolition of slavery within the District of Columbia, at the earliest period that may be deemed safe and expedient, according to the wisdom of Congress. They ask this, conscientiously believing that this is the sentiment and expectation of the nation: and believing furthermore, that the example will be gradually followed by many of the southern States, as the evils, impolicy, and injustice of slavery are more and more developed.

Commending you and themselves, with the best interests of humanity, to the mercies of a just God, your memorialists very respectfully and earnestly entreat your prompt attention to the subject.

Signed by direction of the Convention.¹³

¹³ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1828, pp. 33–35.

The following Memorial was reported by Mr. Kesley, and having been amended, was adopted as follows:

TO THE HON. THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, OF THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

The Memorial of the American Convention, &c,

Respectfully sheweth—That your memorialists, citizens of the United States, feel grateful to that Divine Providence, who hath so gloriously protected this nation in the enjoyment of all the privileges of freemen; and whose parental care still preserves to us untrammelled, the right of conscience, and affords to our free citizens all needful facilities in the pursuit and enjoyment of as full a share of happiness as the present condition of man is susceptible of. But while thus enjoying all the blessings of Heaven's richest bounty, your memorialists have viewed with deep regret and heartfelt sorrow, the dark stain on our national character, which is inflicted by the existence of slavery in the District of Columbia. That district being the common property of the nation, and immediately under the control of congress; whatever enormity may be legally permitted therein, becomes the common concern of the whole confederacy. Furthermore if slavery be an evil both moral and political as is generally admitted at the present day, it would seem that the whole nation becomes implicated in its support, so long as it remains sanctioned by law in that district which is the seat of our government, and depository of our rights. Your memorialists therefore, feeling in common with many thousands of their fellow citizens, unwilling to sanction so great an evil, and desirous to do all that is in their power towards its removal, beg leave, earnestly, yet respectfully, to urge the consideration of this subject, on the attention of congress.

Your memorialists are aware that difficulties are found in the way of an immediate emancipation of those slaves now existing; arising out of a supposed right of property in those who hold them; as well as from a disqualification for self-government on the part of the slaves themselves, but which would be entirely obviated by an enactment providing that from and after a given date all persons born within the district, shall be free at a given age. By the enactment of such a law the wishes of a very large proportion of the individuals represented by your honourable body, it is believed would be met; and that so much at least, ought to be done by the national legislature, seems to be demanded not only by the claims

of humanity and justice, but also by those of patriotism and consistency. Amongst the first acts of the congress of this Union, was one to abolish the African slave trade; and our whole existence as a nation is based on the principle that "all men are created equal;" and shall the congress of these states at the present day, hesitate to declare, that henceforth and forever, the child that is born within the limits of its special legislation, shall breathe an atmosphere of liberty?

Under a full conviction that the true interest of the nation requires the interposition of congress in this important matter; and with a full and entire reliance on the wisdom of your honorable body; your memorialists decline any argument to prove the justice or reasonableness of the prayer, or to show the obligation that lies upon the legislature of this happy country, to interpose its authority in behalf of the offspring of these subjects of oppression, and thus remove the odium which attaches to the American name by the existence of slavery in the national domain.

Your memorialists would also intreat your attention to the necessity of passing laws for the prevention of kidnapping, and the scenes of cruelty connected with the slave trade in the District of Columbia, until its final abolition.

Many of the African race, purchased for a distant market, are concentrated here, where the sounds of the clanking fetters mingle with the voice of the American statesmen, legislating for a free people.

This district, from its central situation, has become a depot of slaves, purchased and introduced by dealers from other states, and here incarcerated till the time of their transportation arrives. In near view from the capital, are private jails, from whose walls issue the agonizing cries of those separated from kindred and friends, revolting to every citizen and philanthropist. Here, through the defect of existing laws, facilities are afforded persons denominated slave traders, to consign to perpetual bondage those who are entitled to freedom after a term of years, and the people regard with abhorrence and pain, a traffic extensively carried on by those who prefer wealth to the love and esteem of mankind.

In this district whether its citizens be the friends or opponents of the abolition of slavery, they regard this traffic as alike dishonorable to our character as Americans and christians, and demanding the interposition of the government. The honor of our common

country, a respect for the opinions of mankind, the ardent desire of our patriots and statesmen to remove the curse of slavery entailed on us while colonies, when it can successfully be done, call for your interference on this momentous subject.¹⁴

TO THE AMERICAN CONVENTION, &c.—The committee appointed to draft a memorial to the legislatures of the several states praying that their representatives in Congress may be requested, and their senators instructed to use their exertions to produce the passage of an act for the gradual abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia,

Respectfully report, That they have prepared and herewith present the draft of such a memorial for the consideration of the Convention.

JAMES OSWALD GRIM,
Chairman.

December 11, 1829.

To the Honourable the legislature of the state of

The Memorial of “ The American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery and improving the condition of the African race ” assembled at Washington, in the District of Columbia.

Respectfully Represents,—That feeling a strong solicitude to advance the object for which they are associated, your memorialists approach your honorable body for its concurrence and aid upon a matter which they conceive to be of great interest to the American people. That the existence of slavery within the United States is a great evil and one for which an adequate remedy is, of all national objects the most to be desired, is a truth in which the whole body of our fellow-citizens have for a long time acquiesced; but whether its ultimate and entire removal is ever to be effected, compatibly with that justice to the parties concerned upon which it should be based, is a problem that remains to be solved, but to which philanthropists are now daily directing their attention.

The success, however which has attended the efforts of many of the States of the Union, who at an early period of our national history were encumbered by the same evil in a lesser degree but who have since been successful in removing it, induce a hope in your memorialists that slavery may be abolished in the District of Columbia. That if possible it *ought* to be, some interesting considerations

¹⁴ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1829, pp. 21–24.

of a local character, peculiarly dictate. The significant and peculiar silence discovered upon the face of the constitutional compact of the land, upon the great subject of human servitude with which the country then was burthened, the care which was observed by the sages, who framed the instrument, not to employ a term in its structure which might in after years and in times of universal freedom, be appealed to for the purpose of accusation or reproach, enjoin it, we think as a strong and imperative duty to their successors to remove this growing evil from the seat of the councils of the nation and the limits emphatically of the national domain. Without therefore attempting to interfere with the exclusive duties of state sovereignties, it is incumbent we think upon national legislators, to give effect to the noble and benign spirit of the great charter under which they are convened, by devising and enacting measures for the gradual emancipation of all who are in a state of servitude in the District of Columbia. Nor can we for a moment believe that it is a subject upon which local situation can give rise to any diversity of sentiment among Americans at large. The dictates of patriotic pride and of national consistency must have the same force with all of them.

The people of these states have cause to be distinguished for numerous occasions upon which, and that too in many instances by discarding all interested considerations they have sought the establishment of great national principles. Without advertising to the events connected with the origin of their independence, further than to say that they were founded in a regard for free principles in the abstract, more than in any practical evil under which they were suffering, we may mention the extension of the principles of free trade, the abolition of private warfare on the ocean, the denunciation of the African slave trade as piracy, &c. as propositions by which our country has endeavoured to discharge its duty in the great family of nations. From a people thus naturally disposed, what may not be expected? What circumstances of accident or temporary advantage will be able to stifle the strengthening voice of freedom and manly justice?

The friends of Abolition must indeed expect that the object can only be obtained by very gradual means, but a period no matter how distant, for the certain operation of any principle which may have the desired effect, must afford a great degree of satisfaction to every friend of equal rights and every well wisher of the reputation of his country.

This object however, cannot be obtained except perhaps at a distance of time now invisible, unless the wishes of the states with regard to it are audibly expressed. Congress have been heretofore memorialized on this subject, but as they were not guided by any expression of the wishes of their constituents, so satisfactory result was produced. But the great body of the American people never can be indifferent to a matter of this nature, and the friends of the cause of Abolition have taken measures to draw the attention of Congress once more to it.

Your memorialists therefore respectfully request your Honorable body to instruct your senators and request your representatives in Congress, to use all their effort for the passage of a law, which may have for its end the gradual abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, upon principles of justice and a regard to the rights of individuals.

Thomas Earle presented the follow report, which was read and accepted Viz.

The committee to whom was referred the consideration of the various proposed schemes for effecting the abolition of slavery and improving the condition of the African race, respectfully report:

That it has been proposed, as a preliminary to complete emancipation, to reduce slaves to the condition of the serfs of Poland and Russia, fixed to the soil, without the right on the part of the master to remove them. It appears extremely doubtful to your committee whether such a measure would in any degree accelerate entire emancipation. The proposition moreover, has not received that degree of public approbation which is necessary to justify any expectation of its speedy adoption.

Some individuals have believed it perfectly safe and judicious, to obtain, if practicable, legislative enactments for the immediate liberation of all slaves. Propositions of this nature are met by a reprobation so universal on the part of the citizens of those states where slavery exists, who have undoubtedly the best means of judging of the probable consequences, that it may be considered certain they will not be adopted. Gradual abolition is the only mode which at present appears likely to receive the public sanction.

Another proposition has been that those who are not owners of slaves should abstain from the products of slave labour, and thus by destroying the market compel emancipation. Your committee are of opinion that it would be far easier to persuade the majority

of the people to pass laws for the abolition of slavery than to break off all commercial intercourse with slave holders. The more practicable measure would render the less practicable, unnecessary.

It seems probable, however, that the example of individuals who, from conscientious motives, abstain from the produce of slavery, will have its uses in exciting public attention to the nature and magnitude of the evil which leads to these instances of self-denial.

It has been strenuously urged that there is less pecuniary profit in the employment of slave labour, than in that of freemen, and that the extensive promulgation of this truth will be effective in inducing slave holders, from motives of interest, to consent to emancipation. Although this doctrine has been promulgated for several years, facts have not been adduced sufficient to carry general conviction to the minds of those interested. Unless some evidence of a more conclusive or effectual nature can be adduced, it appears that little good can be expected from the agitation of this matter.

But in whatever degree the question of immediate pecuniary profit may be unsettled, the evils of slavery in affecting the morals and happiness of society, in abridging public and private enterprise, in promoting idleness and extravagance, and in accelerating the impoverishment of land, are sufficiently capable of demonstration, and are indeed freely admitted by many slave holders. To continue to call the attention of the people to these effects, will undoubtedly be useful in the furtherance of the grand object of our aim.

The passage of laws by our state legislatures, fixing a certain period after which all shall be born free, or shall be free at a certain age, is a proposed measure which has formerly received the sanction of this Convention. It is analagous to those which have already been adopted in some of our states, and it is that by which the final extinction of slavery will probably be effected throughout our country. But it seems unlikely that those states where slaves are very numerous, will consent to the measure, until the proportion of slaves has been considerably reduced by other means. It can hardly be expected that the whites, where they are a minority, will, at any near period of time, consent to surrender political power into the hands of a race which they are accustomed to look upon as inferior and degraded, or that they will be free from apprehension of a contest for property as the probable result. History furnishes no instance of the passage of a law for abolishing slavery

in a nation where the slaves at the time of its passage were nearly equal in number to the freemen. We have no evidence to justify the assumption, that mankind in future will act differently. The condition of some of our states, never-the-less, is such, that measures of this kind may with great propriety be urged, and kept constantly in view of the public.

Appeals to a sense of justice, and the dictates of religion, operating on individuals to produce voluntary emancipation, have been the chief means by which slavery has been abolished or greatly reduced, in most countries where it once extensively existed. Such were the means of the liberation of serfs in Great Britain and other European countries.¹⁵ They are those which have produced the emancipation of most of the free coloured people now existing in the United States. They are those which must be looked to, for so far diminishing the evil, as to produce that state of society in which the passage of laws for complete abolition may be obtained. But unfortunately a sense of danger, mingled with other motives or interest, has produced the enactment of laws in most of the slave holding states, prohibiting or greatly limiting the exercise of benevolent feelings in this way. The repeal of these laws must be the first or an early measure towards the completion of the great work.

It has been supposed that adequate provision of the colonization of emancipated persons in Africa, Hayti, or other foreign or domestic territory, would tend to produce the repeal of those laws, as well as of those which restrict the education of slaves, and would thus pave the way for the adoption of laws for complete emancipation. If, in this way, the number of slaves could be kept stationary, while that of the free whites should continue to increase, the relative proportions would ere long be obtained which would justify the hopes of legislative interference. The interference of legislatures does not depend so much on the number of slaves, as upon their proportion to the free inhabitants. This position is illustrated by the fact that in New York where slavery is now extinct, the number of slaves in 1820 was ten thousand and eighty-eight, while

¹⁵ "The holy fathers, monks and friars, had in their confessions and specially in their extreme and deadly sickness, convinced the laity how dangerous a practice it was, for one Christian man to hold another in bondage; so that temporal men by little and little, by reason of that terror in their consciences, were glad to manumit all their villeins."—Sir T. Smith *His. Common*, vide 2. Blackstone, p. 96.

in Delaware, where no laws for emancipation have been passed, the number was only four thousand five hundred and nine.

We are informed that a conviction of the injurious effects of the presence of free blacks, is general in the slave-holding states, even perhaps among those citizens who have no property invested in slaves. We are also assured and believe that there are great numbers of persons in those states who would emancipate their slaves, if a suitable asylum abroad were provided for them; and that the number of individuals of this description is likely greatly to increase if ample means of emigration are provided.¹⁶

The question therefore arises, whether colonization to any considerable extent is practicable. The solution of this question depends, in a degree, upon the expense, and the means which there is reason to hope may be commanded. The public mind in the greater portion of our country appears more favorable to colonization than to any other proposed means of emancipation, as may be gathered from the resolutions and laws adopted by Congress, and by various State Legislatures, as well as from inquiry into the sentiments of private individuals. Consequently, if adequate colonization could be effected by the national government without materially embarrassing its operations, or requiring the imposition of new taxes upon the people, there is reason to hope for its realization. The question of expense, and practicability is, we apprehend, too often decided hastily, and without those accurate calculations which can alone justify a positive conclusion.

We will therefore state the results of some of our inquiries. The number of slaves in the United States is rather under two millions:¹⁷ and the annual increase is something less than two and a half *per centum* on the population of the preceding year.¹⁸ The total increase per annum, is therefore short of fifty thousand. The expense of transportation to Africa in merchant vessels will not exceed thirty dollars per head, and to Hayti from ten to fifteen dollars per head. The expense of transporting the increase, half to each of the above named countries, would therefore be from one

¹⁶ Two thousand slaves are said to be now offered to the Colonization Society for transportation.

¹⁷ The slave population in 1810 was 1,191,364; in 1820, 1,531,436. Increasing in the same ratio, in 1830 it will be 1,948,587.

¹⁸ The increase in ten years is about twenty-eight per centum, but as the increase of the latter portion of the period is much greater than that of the former portion, it will be evident that our estimate for a single year is correct.

million to one million one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars yearly. If we add two dollars per head for corn to maintain the emigrants until they can provide for themselves, the total expense will not exceed one and one fourth million of dollars per annum.

The average annual revenue of the national government may be estimated at twenty-three millions;¹⁹ and the annual expenditure exclusive of the public debt, is about twelve millions. As the public debt will be extinct in four or five years, there will shortly be a surplus revenue of about eleven millions yearly. One eighth of this sum will be sufficient for transporting the whole increase of slave population.

Again: the annual expenditure of the Naval Department of the United States, was estimated in 1827 at \$4,263,877, and in 1828 at \$4,420,000. This expenditure is more than treble that of the same department, at some periods of our history. Without expressing any opinion of the propriety of this expenditure, a question not proper for this Convention to decide, we may remark that rational men will readily admit that it would be wiser to reduce the expenditure one half, and abolish slavery, than to continue both the expenditure and the servitude. A reduction of one half in the naval expenditures would produce a fund of \$2,200,000 per annum; a sum sufficient to transport to Africa and Hayti, ninety thousand slaves per annum, or forty thousand more than the annual increase. We offer this observation merely in illustration of the ease with which the government *can* command the necessary funds without any sacrifice that is not greatly overbalanced by the importance of the subject. There would, however, be no occasion for retrenching any of the present expenditures of the government.

It has been suggested that the public vessels of the nation, most of which are useless during peace, should be employed in the transportation of emancipated persons. The number of these vessels is about fifty, and the average number of persons which they could transport at a voyage, may be estimated at one thousand, although the ships of the line, of which there are twelve built and building, can transport two thousand five hundred each, at a voyage. These vessels going one half to Africa, and one half to Hayti, and the former making two and the latter four voyages per year, would transport one hundred and fifty thousand persons per annum, or three times the increase of slaves; and would at this rate extinguish

¹⁹ In 1828 it was \$24,789,463. See Treasury Report for 1829.

slavery in twenty years. The whole increase of slaves might therefore be transported in public vessels, without interfering with other national objects, or very materially increasing the national expenses.

We will now consider the effect of transporting the increase. The present population of the slave holding states is about 5,800,000, of which above 3,800,000, are freemen; perhaps from one third to one half the free people are interested in slave property. If the increase of slaves were colonized, in about twenty-five years there would be in the slave states, seven millions of free people to two millions of free people to the above number of slaves, or a proportion of ten to one. The consequent increased ease, safety, and probability of obtaining laws for total emancipation, is manifest.

Thus the practicability of great benefit, with little sacrifice, from the aid of government in the work of emigration, is very apparent. A great recommendation of the measure arises from the fact, that it is the only efficient one which is likely to be speedily sanctioned by the people; and is the only one by which voluntary emancipation, in most of the slave holding states, can be effected.

Even if colonization should not be adopted to the extent of carrying away the whole increase, it ought still to be encouraged. It is considered a great and good work to have obtained by law, the emancipation of about fourteen or fifteen thousand persons in New York and Pennsylvania. If so, the emancipation of no more than that number, by aid of emigration to suitable countries, would also be a work worthy the united efforts of the friends of abolition.

Your committee do not look to the transportation of the whole coloured population from this country, at any period. Emancipation will be effected without it. But partial emigration may greatly aid the cause; particularly in its early stages, by preparing the way for the repeal of the laws against education and against voluntary emancipation.

Under the influence of the foregoing considerations your committee would recommend, that the friends of emancipation persevere in their efforts to convince the whole community of the pernicious effects of slavery on the morals, the enterprize, and the happiness of a people.

That they continue in temperate and conciliatory language to illustrate the inconsistency of bondage, with sound political doctrines, as well as with the obligations of justice and religion.

That they constantly endeavour to procure the repeal of those laws which restrict the education and emancipation of slaves.

That they exert themselves, particularly in the states where slaves are the least numerous, to procure the speedy passage of laws for gradual abolition.

That they endeavour to procure from the National Government the appropriation of adequate funds to aid the voluntary emigration of all emancipated people of colour, to any country where a suitable asylum may be found: and that, as an auxiliary means, they petition the state legislature for the passage of resolutions approbatory of such measure.

That they cordially aid in any just mode of promoting abolitions which is favourably received by the people, without insisting on a preference of other modes, which might be abstractedly the best, but are not likely to be generally adopted.—All of which is respectfully submitted.

On behalf of the Committee,²⁰

T. EARLE, Chairman.

December 11th, 1829.

TO THE CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES.

The address of the Delegates from the several Societies, formed in different parts of the United States, for promoting the abolition of slavery, in Convention assembled at Philadelphia, on the first day of January, 1794.

Friends and Fellow-citizens,

United to you by the ties of citizenship, and partakers with you of the blessings of a free government, we take the liberty of addressing you upon a subject, highly interesting to the credit and prosperity of the United States.

It is the glory of our country to have originated a system of opposition to the commerce in that part of our fellow-creatures, who compose the nations of Africa.

Much has been done by the citizens of some of the states to abolish this disgraceful traffic, and to improve the condition of those unhappy people, whom the ignorance, or the avarice of our ancestors had bequeathed to us as slaves; but the evil still continues, and our country is yet disgraced by laws and practices, which level the creature man with a part of the brute creation.

Many reasons concur in persuading us to abolish domestic slavery in our country.

²⁰ American Convention Abolition Societies, Minutes, 1821–1829, pp. 25–35.

It is inconsistent with the safety of the liberties of the United States.

Freedom and slavery cannot long exist together. An unlimited power over the time, labour, and posterity of our fellow-creatures, necessarily unfits men for discharging the public and private duties of citizens of a republic.

It is inconsistent with sound policy ; in exposing the states which permit it, to all those evils which insurrections, and the most resentful war have introduced into one of the richest islands in the West-Indies.

It is unfriendly to the present exertions of the inhabitants of Europe, in favour of liberty. What people will advocate freedom, with a zeal proportioned to its blessings, while they view the purest republic in the world tolerating in its bosom a body of slaves?

In vain has the tyranny of kings been rejected, while we permit in our country a domestic despotism, which involves, in its nature, most of the vices and miseries that we have endeavoured to avoid.

It is degrading to our rank as men in the scale of being. Let us use our reason and social affections for the purposes for which they were given, or cease to boast a preeminence over animals, that are unpolluted with our crimes.

But higher motives to justice and humanity towards our fellow-creatures remain yet to be mentioned.

Domestic slavery is repugnant to the principles of Christianity. It prostrates every benevolent and just principle of action in the human heart. It is rebellion against the authority of a common FATHER. It is a practical denial of the extent and efficacy of the death of a common SAVIOUR. It is an usurpation of the prerogative of the GREAT SOVEREIGN of the universe, who has solemnly claimed an exclusive property in the souls of men.

But if this view of the enormity of the evil of domestic slavery should not affect us, there is one consideration more which ought to alarm and impress us, especially at the present juncture.

It is a violation of a divine precept of universal justice, which has, in no instance, escaped with impunity.

The crimes of nations, as well as of individuals, are often designated in their punishment ; and we conceive it to be no forced construction, of some of the calamities which now distress or impend our country, to believe that they are the measure of evils, which we have meted to others.

The ravages committed upon many of our fellow-citizens by the Indians, and the depredations upon the liberty and commerce of others of the citizens of the United States by the Algerines, both unite in proclaiming to us, in the most forcible language, “to loose the bands of wickedness, to break every yoke, to undo heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed go free.”

We shall conclude this address by recommending to you,

First, To refrain immediately from that species of rapine and murder which has improperly been softened with the name of the African trade. It is Indian cruelty, and Algerine piracy, in another form.

Secondly, To form Societies, in every state, for the purpose of promoting the abolition of the slave-trade, of domestic slavery, the relief of persons unlawfully held in bondage, and for the improvement of the condition of Africans, and their descendants amongst us.

The Societies, which we represent, have beheld, with triumph, the success of their exertions, in many instances, in favour of their African brethren; and, in a full reliance upon the continuance of divine support and direction, they humbly hope, their labours will never cease, while there exists a single slave in the United States.²¹

TO THE CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES.

Friends and Fellow Citizens,

VARIOUS Societies having been formed, in different parts of the Union, for the purpose of promoting the Abolition of Slavery, they have several times met in convention to deliberate on the best means of furthering the humane work they have undertaken.—We, the seventh association of Delegates from these bodies, now convened in the city of Philadelphia, appealing to the Searcher of hearts for the rectitude of our intentions, believe it our duty to address you with a few remarks, to which we solicit your candid consideration and attention. Believing as we do, that the benevolent Author of nature has made no essential distinction in the human race, and that all the individuals of the great family of mankind have a common claim upon the general fund of natural bounties, we have never hesitated to avow the objects of our institutions, now the honest means by which we hope for their ultimate attainment. Yet we are sensible that many of our fellow citizens have laboured

²¹ Minutes of Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1794, pp. 22–25.